

University Branch Library

Seattle Planning Commissioner: Mimi Sheridan

Facilitator: Donna Morse, DPD

Note Taker: Scott Dvorak, DPD

Attendees:

- Queen Anne Community Council and the uptown Alliance
 - Wallingford Community Council, former Design Review Board Member
 - University District resident
 - Roosevelt Neighbors Alliance
 - Seattle Planning Commissioner
 - Lake City Community Council
 - Othello Neighborhood Association
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1. “What is the nature of new development in/near your neighborhood? Are a variety of housing types being built or are they all similar?”

I find my biggest concern is of living in what I’ve always considered the Roosevelt District, as distinct from the University District, in this sort of little commercial enclave area on this sort of single family (SF) houses and that kind of thing. And the last couple of structures to go up near me are private dormitories. And I’ve been very, very distressed. I made some calls when a single family home was torn down a couple of doors down from me. And a development was going up and it looked like it was going to be a triplex, so I called because there was no notice of proposed land use (LU) action. I got in touch with someone, who was very hostile, on the only flyer I got about the fact that this was being done, and she said, “Well, we don’t have to do that until after we finish completing the structure and that’s when we’re going to put in the proposal.” And I said, “Well then how can anyone put up any kind of disagreement about the LU being changed?” And it turns out it wasn’t a triplex at all. It is 24 private dormitory rooms and there is another one down the block. They’re just springing up everywhere. They’re all called Collegiate Court and what they’re doing is bringing, what appears to be a Greek Row-type element into a neighborhood that is filled with SF dwellings. My concern is to really keep a lid on that. Students are loud, noisy, and keep different schedules and hours. They seem to forget that the rest of the world still has to get up on Monday morning even when, you know, exams are over for them and they can party all night and sleep in. My neighborhood is filled with SF homes, young families and that kind of thing. And the other thing that I’ve noticed that is concerning to me is with all these SF homes, the new structures are really quite towering, leaving the SF units in their shadow. I guess those are the couple of things, plus it just seems to be a predominance of rental units. Everything that is going up is rental. There’s apartments – even the mixed use where they put up the new Continental Café and World Cup and above those are apartments for rent. And on the corner of Ravenna and Roosevelt – apartments. And there aren’t any of the lovely looking town homes in these other neighborhoods. So they’re tearing down homes that people have owned for years and putting up rentals, that are bringing, very, very small rentals – either these private dorm rooms or small studios and one bedrooms that are attractive to students. And really the families are being pushed out of the neighborhood. And that’s really my strongest concern.

Donna Morse: The nature of the new development in your neighborhood is a similar type of housing that is all multiple dwellings?

That right. It's different.

I have the exact same concern. Congregate housing is our neighborhood's group's largest concern. The situation is that under a whole range of housing types, without additional rules to regulate what is actually being built, under certain building types like townhouse, duplex, triplex, you're essentially getting all kinds of private dorms popping up. And what is happening now is the U-District was up-zoned in the 50's and 60's and down-zoned you have a lot of grandfathered structures. You have some duplexes and triplexes on some streets. But, a lot of SF as well. And it has existed as kind of an uneasy equilibrium. Sometimes somebody will come in and convert a duplex into SF, sometimes go the other direction. But, this kind of the next stage. And, you know, it seems the City doesn't want to regulate this because it will dampen development and is bad for business. But, in reality, you get too many of these in and no other developer is going to have an interest in them. And there is cases where, in Roosevelt – I happen to be walking with my son and noticed these sort of things that looked like townhouses, but in reality they were permitted as a triplex, but there were 8 units in each one. So, 24 units for 3 parking spaces. And this was all apparently done legally. And this is the one thing, a lot of things are getting better in this area and the City really wants to increase density and there is a lot of high quality developers that are interested in this area. And some where housing is finally starting to happen. But, don't get a handle on this right away, not only will huge lost opportunity. Once the homeowners leave, this area will just become a law enforcement, vandalism nightmare. And in reality, I would guess that less than 1% of developers would ever be interested in this in the first place, so if it gets regulated, you know, 99% of developers wouldn't care one way or the other. So, there's no reason for it other than the University, it takes the pressure off the University, nobody is yelling at them to build another dorm.

Donna Morse: Do either one of you happen to know what the zoning is?

It varies everywhere from Lowrise 1 (L1) to, I think, to Midrise residential. Essentially, it's got a hundred and something units, and it was built on two lots that contained two SF homes. So, basically, a big huge box with a hundred and something dorm rooms. And the thing, it isn't even affordable housing. Some of them ran for \$800 a month or \$900 or \$1000 for a single dorm room. And they're sort of trolling for int'l students who don't understand the economics of the fact that you can get a decent studio for \$600.

Some are that high and I have the paperwork to prove it. We were all kind of blown away. And it goes all down to the L1 zone where they're doing duplexes and triplexes with 8 rooms per, whatever you call it, per unit. And in reality, it's a triplex with 3, 2 BR complexes, 8 BR complexes.

Also the concern that that's considered multifamily (MF) housing when its essentially dorm housing for UW students. It's a misnomer and misleading.

Donna Morse: That's a distinction, as opposed to townhouses or duplexes that might have families?

Yes.

Well, mine is a completely different neighborhood. I live in Southeast (SE) Seattle and the question being, what's it like - the housing being built recently in MF housing. In the past, the older MF housing was mostly built in the 50's and 60's. And it is positively hideous and positively crime ridden. And nobody really wants to live there, you only live there because you can't afford to live anywhere else. Its pretty dreadful. But, more recently, what's been built by Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is very attractive and integrated with different income levels and it is pretty nice, I think. But, then there are other developments going up, like along MLK Way now where they look a little better than what was built in the 50's and 60's. You know, they have these garages that are right up against the sidewalk and you have these garage-scapes all around the building. And they're not really very attractive. I mean, this

particular one I'm thinking of. But there is another place going up on Rainier Ave, it's huge. When I first saw it being built I thought, "This is too big, it's massive!" But, I noticed they have it modulated, I think this might be partly SHA too, but I'm not sure. But, they have it modulated so... By the way, in our neighborhood the MF housing put up, basically, and managed by SHA, they tried to keep the Craftsman/bungalow style, which is how the neighborhood was originally built. This new building on Rainier Ave has some of that quality to it, you know like gabled roofs and little porches. So it is pretty nice, but they amazing thing to me, sitting next to the ugliest, ugly, ugly property you can imagine. And here these nice houses they're building and they'll look over on to this total blight. So, hopefully there'll be some purchasing of some of this, nobody who owns this property would want to look down on this. Maybe they're just sitting on it hoping the price goes up or something. But, anyway, that's kind of where it's at.

Donna Morse: So for you, aesthetics is an important element?

Oh my gosh! What I think is that, we had these neighborhood design guidelines done and all that, and I think, really, you know, even if you look at something written on paper – the rules – that's what we're working on right now, the rules? Yeah. And, you know tell you the words that the developers are supposed to be following. Hey, I want to see a picture! The first thing I want to see when I go into a design review board is a picture of what they're going to put there. And you don't get to see that, even the development going up – Mt. Baker Housing Assoc. And they have a supposedly wonderful plan and our neighborhood got behind it and it is supposed to go up in a couple years right at the corner of MLK & Othello streets. It's going to be right by the light rail station, practically next door to the light rail station. It's going to look out at the park and, you know, commercial in the back on the MLK side. And it's going to be really nice, supposedly. But, you know I and my neighbors are happy, but I haven't yet seen a picture of it? So, I won't know for sure in my mind what it is going to look like. I think that's what they should have, so people will know.

Sometimes that pictures you see in the beginning are not what you get in the end, unless there is an enforcement.

At least if you have a picture you have something you can call them on. You can say, "It was supposed to look like this." Like Othello looks way better than the pictures.

We have a LU review committee in our Community Council and we are continually looking at zoning issues. There are three areas right now drawing our attention: the totality of Uptown, particularly the area around the new Gates Foundation campus; and the two monorail station locations. Obviously the monorail station locations will be different. Even if the monorail is not built, but they'll still be prime centers for dense urban housing. The other one is Dravus and 16th. Again, somewhat a monorail station being there, but also viable because it is a major bus stop there.

Another area is the Queen Anne (QA) North, which is the top of QA Hill, which is very poorly supported by arterials. Basically it has one working arterial and two flanking arterials a block to the north and south. It has parking on both sides, probably impossible to remove. So, the nature of the new development in Uptown: we're getting a lot of commercial development. One property owner owns 17 big parcels – Martin Selig, enemy of the monorail. So we're concerned to stimulate some residential and persuade him to do some residential. And those are Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) zone? They're pretty dense. We're pretty concerned that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Campus isn't going to include any housing. We're concerned about how we can get some housing to surround that. Dravus and 16th: really borne out of similar concern of the development. North Bay industrial redevelopment area has found it politically infeasible to request a rezone for housing in it. This is a nearby area that also coincides with major bus stops and a monorail station. That could probably be quite dense and there has

been quite a lot of push back from DPD on that, from Tom Hauger. Who first advised the Interbay Neighborhood Group, who is interested in redevelopment. Tried for Hub Urban Village, but it turned out that was a political bombshell in City Hall. It wouldn't work. But, nonetheless, it is still very appropriate for higher density housing, come monorail or not. QA North is a very shallow residential urban village, a half a block on either side of QA North with a short extension on the either side of Galer and Boston. And that is simply going to be very difficult with vehicular transportation if it is filled out. We resisted, our Community Council resisted that urban village in the beginning. But, we were pushed under by what is now DPD. We have it and it is beginning to fill up. It is tough. I have some other detail I could go into about the 7' height increase, but perhaps that isn't appropriate.

In Lake City we're getting a mix of MF everything from mostly townhouse (2 and 3 story) and 6 and 8 story buildings. Most are in appropriate places in terms zoning and commercial district. The main concerns that people have are the reduction in parking and reduction in open space that seem to be in the Comprehensive Plan review process now. And people are quite alarmed about that. But, we do have a mix of types of building. Some are of a better visual quality and others will be pretty much warehouse of fairly cheap materials. That's what our design guides were trying to do. Lake City has always been a low-rent area and we've really tried to get better and more permanent structures. And that's a mixed bag.

Because we're close to the U-district we have, at the eastern end of the neighborhood, a lot of houses converted into dormitories. And under the Brown vs. Tacoma ruling, which nobody bothered to challenge, the City isn't allowed to go in and check what is going on anymore. Unless somebody who lives there complains, in which case they are immediately evicted. So, we're concerned that the City isn't paying attention to any of these areas and it is really inappropriate to take a SF house and turn it into a dormitory with 8 rooms. In the L-zones, mostly we're getting townhouses. Initially in the areas around Greenlake had some really nice townhouses built. And now they're just cramming on as much as they can. And they have the new 5' setback all the way around. If they're less than 6 units, the projects don't get advertised to the public for comment. And so everybody tries to get a lot they can build 6 units on and not have to have any comments. But then they can ask DPD for variances and DPD grants all the variances and there's not comment on any of this. So the backyard is varianced away, it becomes a 5' setback instead of 20-30, the front yard goes away. Every variance they want is granted by DPD with no comment from the public at all. So you actually get a building that is much larger than the code will allow through variance with no public comment. The other thing that is happening is the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) basically says that you can not take a piece of property, or multiple properties, and develop in a way that avoids SEPA. In other words, you can't take a property, divide it into two and say, "Oh, I only have 6 here and 6 here." If the developer is doing that they have to combine those and the impact has to be treated. But, in our neighborhood, DPD specifically counsels developers to divide their things up and then go in and avoid SEPA. And that is what is happening with all these old properties. To the City's great help, they avoid SEPA and the City grants the variances. We get a totally different product than what we were promised in these drawings. And that is happening consistently. Most of the biggest buildings are in the commercial zones, which are not strictly a product of this. But that's what is being built. And we do have most of that going through design review, fortunately. Our only problem there is that the design review board typically listens to the neighborhood and then decides that they're architects (and I'm an architect myself) and they have a better sense of what is important than all the neighbors that have come and commented. So, the neighbors can come and comment: "we think this should be stepped back" and the architects and developers (because under Nickels more developers are on design review boards) they either say, "Oh no, we think it is really cool." Or they say, and there is one developer on our design review board who always says at the end of the meeting, "Developers should be able to do whatever they want to do with their property." That's the only comment that guy ever makes. And so we have some issues with the City on design review and how it is being applied. We think they're not following the code and actually counseling people away from SEPA. The outcome is the buildings are much bulkier than the drawings would tell us. Some of these drawings look pretty

bulky. And that tells us the setbacks are not adequate. The massing constrictions are not adequate. As you've heard, when you take SF houses and L-zones and build dormitories on them, the parking is nowhere near adequate. Another thing I want to point out, when you look at these drawings you see a lot of fences, every picture has a fence. And that is basically your big statement that, "We've done our development, we're not going to contribute to the community. We're not contributing front yards to in anyway enhance the community or to fit in. We're relying on the community to provide that and we're just going to fence ourselves off." That is the kind of thing that should not be allowed. And I realize it is legal to build fences, but every project needs to contribute to the neighborhood in terms of the visual amenity of the building itself in terms of the setbacks and the landscaping of that project. Not just take, take, take.

2. Are the zones that we have the right ones or are there too many?

We have the L-4 zone. First of all, people should understand that L1, 2, 3, Midrise and Highrise were what there originally was. Lowrise, Duplex, Triplex (LDT) was a compromise with developers and the City that wanted to provide something below lowrise which is townhouses, which would allow people to squeeze another unit on. L-4 was a compromise with the City, which allowed the original L-3, 4-story building, to remain on the books. To be put someplace. So, the reason we now see 7 zones on here was because that is what the developers and City staff wanted to see. It started out with L1, L2, L3, midrise, highrise. And almost everything in the zoning code today is a compromise that some developer wanted something and an exception was put in, another little exception, and exception, and an exception. Communities didn't put any of those exceptions in – they all came from the developers. About 25% of the code is stuff the developers have put in. So it is interesting the Mayor wants to simplify and of course that isn't what he really wants to do at all.

I don't mind these zones. My comment: you can not fill a complex, highly dense city with Houston zoning. You can't do that. You can't achieve high-quality density by saying do what you want. So you get more zones to provide a finer grain – more choices and step things down.

Most of MF development that goes on is actually in the neighborhood commercial zones, the mixed use.

Right. When you think of MF, like on Roosevelt, that's actually not in MF, it's Neighborhood Commercial, the mixed use. The name is NC-3 or NC-2. Basically it is the mixed-use zone where you have commercial on the first floor.

The 1982 zoning that was mentioned earlier didn't have any limit on the number of units that could be on a lot. It had some setbacks, but no limits. And as a result they got a lot more units than they predicted. The '89 revisions put the limits back in. That shifted the development from the MF zone into the commercial zones where there are not limits. And there remains no limits on the number of units it is strictly setbacks and parking that controls that today. And the Mayor proposes to get rid of parking requirements.

I don't really know much about zoning, but when you talk about commercial zoning I know that none of the new construction in, I've seen, including on Roosevelt, is mixed use. It is all strictly residential. And when we were talking about Queen Anne, there is so much commercial development, and I thought, "Well we need some of that, we need more of a mix." And not just this individual, one type of development. It is a very business, commercial district with the car lots and that can certainly be piggybacked on. If the Mayor's going to get rid of parking, and I heard about that, and my one comment is that I don't know any university students that don't have cars. So the fact they're filling it up with college dorms doesn't mean they aren't going to be any cars. They still use cars. What if they're doing a LU practicum and need to go across town to a meeting like this? So the parking is important. What I liked about Columbia City is the nice, central lot. You can spend a dollar and spend a couple of hours in

the neighborhood. I think it is a real plus, it feels very welcoming to visitors. You know, “we have an enormous lot and if you have a buck in your pocket you can stay for a significant amount of time. We were talking about green space and I see what the kind of dense development we’re having is taking away, with the bulk and height of the buildings, it is taking away the sense of openness the neighborhood currently has. And I think, as far as zoning, it needs to be adhered to if there is mixed-use zoning and that isn’t what is being built, but that there needs to be a focus on maintaining it as a pedestrian-friendly area. There should be more commercial sites, places for people to shop, and do all of their errands if the parking is going to be reduced, if things are going to be that dense. And I don’t see any of that nature being built at all.

I don’t really know the difference between all these zones, but if there is going to be simplification there should be connected to certain principles, which I think are lacking now. And one of the things we’re noticing is that things that would make sense in a larger lot, when we try to do them in a tiny lot they don’t make sense. And here’s one example, on 12th which is L-1 north of 50th for a segment and then it turns to SF. You’ve got a lot of pretty nice houses, and some pretty run down ones too. But, there’s one very nice house that sold for \$500K, very nicely kept up, probably in the same family for many years. LU sign went right up, what they’re doing is jamming two new townhouses in the backyard. And where I see that kind of development and where it makes sense is where you see these busy arterials and huge lots. And you can actually see some pretty nice designs, in fact a friend of my wife’s just moved into one in West Seattle. When you allow that, but the lot is tiny, you have a house plus front yard taking up 2/3 and then try to jam two townhouses in the backyard. They’re shaped like turrets and come up like a salt box or something. And it is fortunate they have gotten that one committed, in order to make it work they were trying to get around some egress things. But, I would say it isn’t so much what happens when the lots are too small. And that applies to much of the U-district where there are very few lots that are even 5000 sqft. As to when you try to do the same thing you could do in a 10,000 or 50,000 sqft. lot in a 3,500 sqft. lot it just looks like crap. There really needs to be more nuanced regulation of the appropriate relationship or something to the lot size.

I’ll address the NC zone since that is what we have in the Uptown urban center and the QA residential urban village. As a neighborhood, we’re really a pair of neighborhood: Queen Anne and the view slopes and the Uptown urban center. In keeping with the urban plan, as an urban center we’ll take the big growth hits. In general we’re concerned there be more height allowed in general for NC zones to help focus development into the urban center and urban villages. But, we’re not as thrilled with the urban village concept on top of the hill as DPD is. We are very, very supportive, we reach residential capacity in the Uptown urban center. One comment on the NC zoning, the 7’ height increase in the NC zones should not be predicated on 13,000 sq. ft. or larger retailers. This was an issue of last year where we were offering additional height or ventilation on the ground floor, the sidewalk floor for basically medium to big-box retailers. And we believe that rule required to big-box retailers to dominate that opportunity and we feel that DPD should allow extra height, but not extra stories for any retail, regardless of the number of sqft.

Extra height would presumably allow for all the ventilation ducts for a big-box store. But, we believe that extra height should be allowed for any retail business, regardless of the number of square feet. That would help us attract more small and authentic local retailers to those spaces. And that is important in the Uptown urban center and the QA residential urban village. I’ll let that one go at that.

3. What about new development is contributing positively to neighborhoods and what is not?

If one of goals is keeping families in the city, that is one of my goals, it is not totally clear it is a goal of the City’s. In fact, the young and restless in City Hall seem to be appalled by the notion there are any families in the city. But, if that is one of your goals, it seems to me that allowing the conversion of SF

houses to dormitories works against that. Because those SF houses that are out there are where the families probably prefer to be. And the extent that you allow them to be converted, that's reducing the number of houses and driving up the costs of the houses. So, I think the conversion of dormitories is a bad thing. In addition to that it really, significantly impacts the people immediately next door. These are all party houses, its party, party all the time. They don't take care for their lots, they don't even have any grass left. In many places they just dump gravel in their front yard. So, they really bring down the whole neighborhood. On the positive side, townhouses now in this market are owner-occupied condos. And owner occupancy is a good thing. It doesn't mean that there won't be apartments, and we're having far more apartments built in our neighborhood in commercial zones than we have in multifamily. But, I think the townhouses – the L1 is supposed to be a townhouse, but in the current market they are going to develop in L2 and sometimes even L3 – is a pretty positive thing if it is done well. And initially they were done pretty well. Now they are not.

When you talk about SF homes being converted to dormitories, is that a zoning issue? The alternative might be that they would be demolished.

Well, that is what happens, they're demolished and rebuilt.

Well, you're talking about two different things.

In a SF zone, they're basically going in and carving up the inside to make a bunch of rooms.

But, that's in a single family zone. That's not in a MF zone.

In a MF zone, they're doing what she was talking about.

I just wanted to clarify that you're talking about houses that are in SF zones.

But, since they're becoming multifamily, I think it is fair game for this discussion.

There is a de facto MF if the individual rooms are being individually let. Because, if you have a SF home that is rented to a group of people in college or whatever, it is a group house but it is a single use, a single responsible party. But once you have individual letting of individual rooms it is no longer a single family or single group in any stretch of the imagination. And it is hard to enforce that, but if there were a law on the books saying you couldn't do that in these zones it would give some leverage. You'd have some houses that say "rooms for rent" and they're in SF and their letting out their rooms individually. And that to me is a MF. You couldn't enforce that, how you'd do it isn't totally clear. But, if people are putting billboards up... Once the building is built, the City almost never shows up again.

So, I'd like to piggyback on that and say what is positive and negative. What's positive is new construction, it looks nice. But, the drawback is the lack of vested interest when it is going to be dorm rooms or when the preponderance is rentals. When we're using the ownership in the neighborhood there is a lack of vested interest and when people do own and are concern it really changes what happens block to block. In my neighborhood you can tell from block to block where the rentals are and where the homeowners are because it looks so different.

On the block north of us a small apartment went in and I don't like the architecture, but it isn't overly huge. They put a very nice coffee/wine bar, that looks a normal coffee/wine bar, and they moved the Continental Deli into one of the units. It has a nice feel to it and it is bringing in a lot of people and clearly, it was a parking lot, so you can get really nice amenities. When people see amenities go in they feel good about it. If the design is appropriate for the area.

What about new development contributing positively, I think once it is finished the nice new development is contributing positively. We're getting lots of young families now that we never had before. But, of course when they get there they start noticing the crime and they hear the police sirens and the gunfire at night. They get scared so they talk about moving away. But, I think one thing that's not contributing positively is the fact the construction is so disruptive. We're going to have construction on MLK Way, the whole thing is going to be destroyed. We have these design guidelines for this beautiful business district we hope to have someday. And right now it looks like a war zone. Our neighbors are all mostly law-abiding people with families, but in the parks, even in the new park built by SHA, we're told that gangs gather there in the middle of the night. It is mainly that our parks are being used by elements from outside. I think somehow the construction/destruction is contributing to making our neighborhood appear that nobody cares about it. So they're coming. I don't know what you can really do about that. If you want the long term benefit of what they're building you have to accept the ugliness that is happening as a result.

What about new development that is contributing positively and what is not? I'd like to start out with the proposed historic preservation area on the Uptown urban center. We have a substantial group of historic, brick structures in the NW part of the Uptown urban center. And there needs to be a way to preserve those. Some folks, even some around this table have worked on that and it is an important thing. By and large they are built out to the limits of the zoning so they have their highest and best use. I'll drop down to the townhouse level – we're having a lot of townhouse subdivision on QA Hill. There needs to be a change in the rules so these projects can fit more comfortably into transitional areas. That is a theme that is in our QA neighborhood plan, that these are transitional areas. That has been a difficult one to get DPD to work with for us. That's very important to us. There are townhouses you can build right up against SF residential that are a jarring transition. With a big blank wall, no setbacks, and there are ones that have been done very successfully that have a setback, conform to the front yard setback and look pretty good. There needs to be more attention paid to that at DPD. I'm not sure it requires a rewrite of the zoning. I'm not a zoning pro. In general there needs to be more attention to transitional zones, especially between commercial or mixed-use and SF zones. We have some of those up on QA Hill. There is a pretty mediocre example of that on 10th West where there is a big mixed use that went in next to a SF. Not the worst, but not the best. As far as the Uptown urban center there is a need for affordable housing. We've been able to wedge some affordable condos, slightly below market condos, in what we call Tower Records Project. That's the big Hewitt Architects' project that is a full block where we vacated an alley and in turn got a full block mixed use development between Mercer and Roy. It's going to be quite elegant, but there's only 5 below-market units. That was the best we could bargain on that project. We got some support from the City because of the alley vacation, mainly through Councilmember McIver. I don't think we got a lot of support from DPD on that, but I could be wrong about that. But, we got some. There is a need for below-market units in an urban center that go through an elaborate design review. I was talking a little bit about QA experience with design review in the Uptown experience. We worked pretty hard on it, we have a committee of professionals, I'm the only non-architect and we work hard on every project that goes through DRB and some that don't. The harder you work, the more volunteer hours you can apply to it the more effect you can have. We're generally supportive of the way our DRB works. But, each board is different so maybe ours is more responsive to the community than some others. They were designed to have developers on them, that's part of the function.

I would say of the positive effects of some developments when you get good design and you get people using setbacks and you get people bringing in vegetation in the Craftsman wave. At least we don't have these kind of human warehouse kind of buildings that we used to have. So, those are some good design elements that happen. The downside things, I'm thinking now of the development on the corner of 65th and 25th NE. I see that and I go through that neighborhood once a week and I've noticed the increase along 65th of large, probably apartment buildings and then some sort of large townhouse buildings. And

suddenly, it is probably 4 stories. The build out of that is just shocking to me, because they have crammed so much, just out to the lot line on every side. They've crammed a number of either 3 story townhouse buildings, but they are so crammed in there and immediately facing the walls of the other people. I begin to think, how many people are living in there without a shred of green space here or room for vegetation? So, I think setbacks coupled with much stronger vegetation requirements are one of those things – I mean, we're talking about putting people here. We're building the city of the future and we're densifying and all of these are people who are living stacked among each other and coming and going each day. In Lake City everybody gets their little balcony.

There are benefits from trees, for example, in terms of heating/cooling costs and water retention and a variety of things, it's not just beautiful anymore. So, those are important things and when you see a development go in that has those you just think there's an example that everybody should follow. I'd say those are a quarter of new buildings we see. There's not enough of those in the area. It's the setback and the vegetation.

4. What types of affordable housing are most needed in your neighborhood?

First of all, the City has done a lot of studies on affordable housing and almost all of them conclude the affordable is the housing we have right now, not the new stuff. Although from the marketing side of getting so many changes to developers, the City likes to think that the new stuff is affordable so therefore we have to encourage more. All those studies say that it is all those existing units it's those quasi houses that are a little bit ragged around the edges, that's the real affordable housing. The question is really loaded. There's no way to answer this question other than let the Mayor do whatever he wants. And I don't like the question.

One of the best generators of affordable housing is airports. So, if you want to have more affordable housing encourage Ron Sims to transfer scheduled passenger flights to King County International Airport. Suddenly you'll have a lot of affordable housing in rather poor condition.

Somebody mentioned the old affordable housing. The old affordable housing is not keeping up, it is very sad. But, what's coming in is nice affordable housing, but there is not enough. What is needed is affordable housing that is integrated with the rest of neighborhood, looks well with the houses around it. In New Holly you really can't tell the affordable from the rest of the housing, it's just pretty nice. But, there's just really not enough of that. People are complaining that there won't be enough for the future. As the neighborhood becomes more upscale, more liveable, pleasant it will become more and more expensive. If there isn't housing that isn't designated to be affordable housing, like Mt. Baker Housing Association. There are non-profit groups that try to build affordable housing. We need more of that.

We need more of the ownership type of housing as opposed to the rentals that are going up.

I'll second all your comments for QA and Uptown. We need to integrate affordable housing in new projects as they occur. Because there will be new projects and I agree that older units will make up the bulk of our affordable housing units. For a considerable time the units that are maybe 20-50 years old now, but they'll phase out eventually.

It should be 200 years.

A kind of affordable housing that the QA plan asks not to have are DADUs, detached accessory dwelling units. And that has a lot to do with the limited capacity of the arterials.

Detached accessory dwelling units. They're mostly garage apartments. And there are quite a few illegal ones around town now and there's been a push in a lot of neighborhoods by our elected officials trying to rationalize different schemes for them in different neighborhoods. One size fits all got a lot of push back, but now there's some efforts to sort of tailor that rules to different neighborhoods.

The City found 260 lots, 267 lots in town that were slightly larger than 5,000 sqft and they have allowed now a second lot to be built on all those lots. The Mayor's original plan was that everybody should build a house in their back yard. That's the DADU proposal.

And certain Councilmembers pushed that one. So, we don't like that in QA – it has fire enforcement problems, crime problems, and one eventual result of converting SF dwellings into boarding houses or illegal duplexes is that may be used by organized crime. I can't point to exact places where this is happening, but I can know people who can point to them. So, we don't like them on QA. But, they maybe appropriate in other parts of the city. We think it is very important to establish controls on the number of unrelated persons living in a SF house. You're going to hear that from every neighborhood that's potentially out of control. Part of City Light right now and it has several aspects to it, like illegal elder housing where people are offering to care for elders but they're really putting them in a below-standard rooming house that's illegal. That's aside from the student housing. As Seattle's prosperity crashes you'll see a lot more of that just from people who are in and out of the city. The people who might rent a house or a condo today rent a room or two rooms in a SF residence in a less prosperous time. The City needs to get some kind of hold on that one. I'll leave it at that. We like below-market housing, but we don't like DADUs.

This area is just screaming for more workforce housing. I think the University is the real focal point, but there is Safeco as well. There are people who work at Safeco who live in the U-district. The other issue is we have really good transit to downtown and so it really is an excellent location to get a broader range of both rental and for sale units. I think the reason it hasn't happened because in part because of the lack of rules for the really junk development drive the good developers away. The biggest thing has nothing to do with zoning, I think it has to do with partner of land ownership in the U-district. There is an entity called the University District Parking Associates and they own 14 large lots, there's another set of entities that own other parking oriented businesses. And if basically they don't develop any of the lots, so all of the lots you see around here are mostly empty lots. I think they're going to finally change that. I think they have developers such as Milliken and Harbor Properties trying to buy properties. I think Harbor is going to put one in at 50th and 12th. Those are the kind of better developers that are going to make the housing attractive to workers. Just look at the numbers, Safeco and UW alone, and the available housing for single people who are working or young families who really need that. It is just a scream.

How would you differentiate that from housing that a graduate student or somebody might have?

Personally, I feel that if you build the right sort of building you can mix students with non-students and it is just fine. I really feel strongly about that. But, there's some apartments that are built relatively affordable but they're decent, well-kept, and they have a range of sizes. Then you get an informal social control mechanism, plus you have management that will not tolerate craziness. Then you actually accommodate students. I'm not anti-student, but when you get purpose-built student housing then forget it. It is just hopeless. Some cities actually require that the universities house certain proportion of their student body on the campus. We're not going to be able to get to that target. But I think it is time, for example, for the UW to build another dorm. And that would take some of the pressure and would lead to better developers building a wider range of housing. Some of which would accommodate students.

I don't think graduate students are a particular issue, I think they may be living on grants and not working full time.

I was just wondering how you differentiate between undergraduate and graduate students. There are relatively few undergraduates at the University.

What do you mean?

There are a lot of undergraduates that are there.

Well, but not proportionately.

Because the University is so full of graduate students?

No, we've got some 20,000 some -odd undergraduate students. We're almost pushing 40 and the graduate students are pushing 10. So it is heavily undergrad.

And they make their presence known because they're in a different stage of life. Graduate students are usually lifeworkers although their financial circumstances are usually kind of different.

UW is not the only institution of higher learning in town, either. It's not like it is just one place. There's community colleges and a number of private colleges as well.

We have a consistent low-level conflict with SPU, on the north slope of QA Hill. Because to continue to exist they have to expand their enrollment, although they say they don't. But, with every Master Plan they've expanded. And that is a university that is dedicated to housing students. That is their specialty, housing and supervising students. And they do an excellent job of it. But, nonetheless, they have to buy up SF residential properties by the handful. And they do that, every Master Plan enables them to do more and more. One administrator told their board you can't do this indefinitely, you're going to hit a wall and have a big problem with the City and the community and you should buy property out in a rural area. They canned him and are now concentrating on their next Master Plan phase which will happen in 5 years.

Having worked a little bit with the SHA for the last year or so trying to get this park on part of their property, I realize the demographic swings that effect who wants the MF housing. Its kind of unpredictable. Right now they say they really need family housing and other times it will be senior housing or individual single unit housing. And apparently there are a variety of factors that influence that. And it can shift over several years time. Right now they're looking at townhouses because they need housing for families.

So, would you say that is a type of affordable housing that is most needed in your neighborhood?

Apparently, right now. It's right next to a 6 story, brick cellblock kind of thing that houses both seniors and people with disabilities. Which I understand is not a real happy mix, but is what they were building 10-20 years ago as a place for people to live.

5. What factors do you believe most influence housing affordability? How are these factors addressed or influenced by Land Use Code requirements?

AND

6. In your opinion, what types of development are proven to be most affordable (and for whom?) and does the zoning accommodate this type of development?

Well, when you expand public funds to attract new businesses in the city, be it Amgen selling the waterfront property for \$5 a sqft in an \$80 market. Or whether you're cutting the zoning codes in half in the U-District for Safeco and letting them take over public property to build, you get more demand. All those workers want to live someplace, so you're increasing demand. Every time we spend public dollars to get more businesses to move to the city, we're increasing the demand for housing. That is the number one factor effecting affordable housing. Deputy Mayor Ceis has made the argument that we need to grow and grow rapidly to afford everything we want. And there is no example anywhere in this country or anywhere else where rapid commercial expansion has led to affordable housing, just the opposite. That's exactly what you do if you want to cut affordability, you have rapid commercial expansion. Because the housing market always follows the job market. Job market, pretty soon the housing market creeps up and behind that the retail market. So, we're always following the curve. So, if you want to preserve affordability, you actually want to flatten out the demand for new commercial offices. And make sure they're paying their way when they come in.

I can agree with that. In my experience of looking at American cities, you can't create a stasis; you can't hover in air economically. You have to either have some forward progress with new investments and major economic development at some pace or other. Or your city rapidly begins to lose its tax base and becomes a very unpleasant place to live. Seattle's big claim to fame is that pleasant place to live and it needs that claim because it is way up in a corner of the USA. So, we need to have economic investments like SLU and Northbay and stadium neighborhood. Those are important to the future of the city and the tax base. Once the commercial industrial tax base particularly tax base begins to deteriorate then the load shifts out to the residential property tax payers. And then you have the great winnowing that certainly happened in San Francisco. The very rich live in the city and the very poor live in public housing and assisted housing and there's nothing in between.

But, San Francisco is the most expensive place to live in the West Coast.

It sure is.

And you're saying that's because...

That's what happens when the proportion of the tax base shifts more over to the residential. The taxes are incredible. I sight my home town of Berkeley, CA. I can't agree...there has to be some kind of economic development in the city. And you usually do that by selling the land cheap. We neglected to do that in most of SLU. And now people are complaining about Paul Allen being the developer and calling it Allentown. But, we voted for that, we voted in Allentown.

We did?

Yes, by turning down the Commons. So, we took the public governmental function out of marketing that land and we handed it to Allen and Vulcan and their partners. And by in large, they're doing an o.k. job of infill, it just isn't very inspiring.

Then, I guess that is a good question, what is the City doing to make sure that we're not doing all these tax giveaways for big corporations, places like Safeco. I know people who work for Safeco and they pride themselves, "We keep the U-District alive! And if it weren't for us..." And that is what they tell their employees and they think they're the heart and soul of this neighborhood and this neighborhood would be with brambles blowing through it.

I think it is a true claim, up to a point. Just like King County keeps Eastern Washington alive.

Well, I don't know enough about it. You guys obviously know a lot more about it, but what is the City doing? It goes back to – the philosophy. And what is the City's philosophy and what is going to be the long term expectation of growth?

The other thing that goes with the kind of growth, and I understand and I agree with you, you have to have a sort of dynamic. But, every time you expand those jobs you also bring a whole bunch more services. You bring more kids into the schools and we can't provide a decent school now. Our tax base is really screwed up in this state, it is just terrible, and nobody is willing to deal with it. I think in most places growth always means instead of lowering property taxes it raises it because you need more services, especially schools.

But, the value of your real estate goes up too. So, eventually you cash in.

And tends to drive out the people who can't afford those property taxes. There's got to be some sort of balance point. I think most people perceive that the City is so gung ho for massive economic infusions that it has gotten far out of kilter of a more balanced approach.

Well, I would argue that we aren't particularly gung ho compared to other major metropolitan areas. At least certain elements of local government are trying to do something in this united way. I think there is a real need to focus new residential development in urban villages and centers where the infrastructures and transit can support those added pressures at the lowest cost per unit. Because transportation and transit, which is the center of my interest, and LU are the two sides of the same coin, as they say in planning circles. So, trying to make the urban centers and villages work, I think is of utmost importance. And I think DPD has done a reasonable job of supporting that. Unfortunately, to make urban centers work you need some mass transit when you get to the scale of Seattle. Seattle, I think, is probably the least perceptive City at least on the west coast, on understanding where the threshold for mass transit actually is, because they've never experienced mass transit in this town. It is hard for people to imagine that. That's why we're going through this wavering over the monorail and kvetching about the light rail system. In a way, it is a shame that they're not being developed by a single authority because they would be a lot more articulated and integrated. But, in a way it isn't. Eventually it will happen and it will be a regional 3 county authority of some kind. And when they do a project in Seattle it won't pay anymore attention to the welfare of Seattle than I-5 construction did. But, right now we have a locally funded project which is called a monorail, personally I wish it were a light rail. But, you'll never get that opportunity again. I just always make this plug at any forum I get to. You'll never get this opportunity again and if it unfolds there will be a son of monorail. And there might even be a grandson of monorail. Each generation will be more expensive per ridership unit and will be less satisfactory and will probably be managed at a further distance from Seattle.

I was just going to throw out that the personal preference is that we adopt inclusionary zoning in Seattle. I have read that in California it is quite common, there is something over a hundred jurisdictions that have it, it was pioneered in Maryland. Basically it says that once you build apartments, it might even apply to for sale housing, over a certain size you have to include a certain proportion of affordable units. What it immediately does is keeps certain neighborhoods from becoming high income ghettos. It distributes the affordable housing around the city and basically, from the studies I've seen, does not dampen development. What happens is you get a shift in the interest of developers. Personally, I think we should try to get something like that here, but short of that when you have real bonus stuff going on you could tie it to real affordable housing. Now what they've done is they've got this standard of affordability which is basically often above market rent. And you get a tax break for it. In the U-District they're talking about upzoning an additional 20 ft, from 65' to 85' with essentially no additional requirements from developers. If you're going to do that 20 ft, let's say real affordable housing, then you get that. Its another way to do

the same thing. Its certainly less politically scary. So, I think we really need to start thinking a lot bolder about this.

7. What about the multifamily code requirements is hard to understand or may not produce intended or desired results?

Not addressed.

8. The Comprehensive Plan and many neighborhood plans call for a mix of housing types. How do you think we can achieve a mix of housing types? Do you think the Land Use Code allows for this?

I don't know where this fits into the mix at all, but I know with the closing of Fircrest there have been a lot of displaced folks who need a lot of care. I know it is really hard for group homes in the area to get funding for folks to be in urban areas where there is transportation. Maybe folks don't drive, but are able to work in sheltered workshops or those kinds of things need to be centrally located. So, I don't know what kind of provisions there are. But we need to be looking out for all members of the community and maybe comprehensive thinking about supervised housing and group housing for disabled adults. And thinking about senior housing, you know people who don't necessarily need to be in assisted living or retirement community, but need to make sure that housing is accessible and things like that.

How does that relate to what we were talking about earlier about not allowing more than a certain number of unrelated people in a house?

Well, I'm not talking about...

How do you say that older people are allowed, but not students?

I'm not saying congregate living. I'm saying the types of housing that's being built – is it the type of housing that is accessible. I don't know what the codes are and those things. When I see the words Comprehensive Plan, Neighborhood Plan I'm just saying I want to point out that there are people who may need advocacy for their needs who maybe aren't sitting around at the table. And we need to think about that. When you look at students, you're looking at a transitory population. They're here to go to school and they're gone. There are other folks in the population that need places to live locally, part of the lower income. I'm just piggybacking on that lower income housing and spring boarding into the range of needs that we see amongst people in our community. People, like - now we're looking at a working population what about as people age and become fixed-income dependent. Are these people going to be forced to move, can they stay in their stay in their homes? Looking at the broad spectrum of live span of city residents.

Donna Morse: So what would be a good way to provide for these people? What types of housing do you see in your neighborhood that would serve people?

When I think about that, I think about those pictures in the newspaper when Norm Rice was Mayor. They had those urban villages, what were they called?

I don't know, there was this whole spread of all different kinds of things; a park and different kinds of housing. Different sized houses, blocks that might have a couple of townhouses on the edges, and some 3 bedroom apartments, studios, and that whole range and mix that could accommodate a whole variety including the lower-income. I'm just trying to broaden the thinking by bringing up the needs of other folks.

I don't think LU code allows what you just said.

I'd like to chip in, I felt really strongly that you see what other cities are doing and things that are considered experimental don't get built in Seattle. The other problem is the City is so concerned about cottage housing in the SF that they're not encouraging it in these other zones where it would be a really nice transition. I family might consider moving into cottage housing – one of those weeks where you're sick of fixing things in your house - a nice, more contained place and you've got a yard. I don't know why they aren't encouraging that in the Lowrise zones. I think in some places it could be appropriate in SF in very limited circumstances where you have large sets of lots and where it can really be planned. I think they ought to be encouraging it in L1 and L2. Another thing is standard row houses – hundreds of cities have a SF type situation where you can triple the density. People love it because you have a front yard, you have a stoop, and the backyard.

Donna Morse: Tell us more about the row houses that you're talking about you'd like to see.

I think they all face the street, they probably engineer an alley so people would park in back and cars would be off the street, they'd all have setbacks so they'd have yards in front and in the back. And you can triple the density. There are probably some fire issues, but with modern construction and techniques and maybe concrete partitions... besides, Portland is doing it and Washington DC. And those things are incredibly desirable. People do not feel like it is crummy housing that they want to stay away from, they want it.

You should see the ones I saw last week in Milwaukee, they're right on the river, right downtown, on the river with little lawns.

Its kind of the new urbanism they're doing out in the better suburbs, like the Highlands and Snoqualmie Ridge. The houses are really close together and they have alleys. I'm curious whether you can mix those uses without very tight zoning or you get a domino effect of everything to the highest and best.

The problem, I think comes down to economics. The developer wants to fill the space as well as they can so they may not want to put in some townhouses.

What we have going on right now is the densest housing in the country. This is as dense as it gets and the Mayor wants to make it more dense.

Where is it the densest housing in the country? Where in this town is it the densest in the country?

When you have over a hundred units per acre, that's as dense as it gets in the house.

I do not believe Seattle is the densest city in the country at all.

That is not what I said. Listen to what I'm saying, when you get new housing being built at the densities we're getting now that's as dense as we get in this country.

A lot of the townhouses that are being built now are being built under-dense. So, there is a lot of potential for density where they're putting 4 units and they could get 6.

True, row housing would be more dense.

But, he's talking about particular big projects probably.

Well, I want to put in a plug for urban centers. Because I think that's the place you can do congregate housing effectively. We're having a very large project on Merrill Place which is elder housing as rental apartments partly and congregate housing. Supervised care is about a 1/3 of it, it is integrated together fairly well. And that is in an urban center. I think that's an excellent place for it and will be very attractive. But, it's not cheap and there were absolutely no requirements by the City to have lower and below-market units in that, that I know of. I've asked that question over and over that question is always glossed over, whether it is City staff or elected representatives, or the developer. So, I'm assuming there is no below-market there. That would be an important element to put into the zoning.

Are they for sale units?

They are rentals, it's all rentals. That's the Merrill Gardens formula.

It is not like it is something very easy to figure out what is lower income.

No, it is very easy to figure that out.

Let's get back to what we were talking about earlier related to congregate care. So, that's a big project in an urban center. What about people who want to live in smaller elder care facilities that maybe have 6 people living in homes.

Adult family homes we have more in King and Snohomish County than practically any other region.

Donna Morse: So where's a good place in the neighborhoods for those to go?

People have them next door to them and don't even realize it. They're all over the place, I don't think there's special zoning for that needed at all.

If they're well-run.

About the only retirement/elderly housing area I would ever want to live in would be New Holly. It is between the business district and the rest of the houses, if you had a wheelchair you could wheel down to the Asian market and back. It shouldn't be separate off by itself, I don't care how great of a view it has, it needs to be part of the community.

So you won't be moving to Prospect Point?

The key of all of this is the planning. It used to be that the people of the town planned the town, they said wouldn't it be nice if the town hall was over here and the library here. They made it people-pleasing, that is kind of what we did with our neighborhood design guidelines. Reflecting back to the last question, we're calling it managed gentrification because if you want something affordable you can get some blight pretty cheap. You can't want blight, you have to plan, it is important to have transit around it – that helps make it affordable. Having housing associations – they're part of the community and they're building housing. We're all trying to make our neighborhoods better without pushing out those who are there already. Prices are going to go up, we know that because it will be a nicer neighborhood and people are going to want to live there. But, there has to be planning behind that. You mentioned something earlier about inclusionary zoning, that sounds like a great idea to me. All this would be part of the planning, you need someone there guiding the development. That's what the neighborhood plans are for, you can't let them gather dust on a shelf.

There are four things that people talked about: one is inclusionary zoning where you require affordable to be included based on bonuses. The only question I would have is what is the base? For my money in the commercial zones the bases are already very high. We're getting 60-70 units per acre in 4-story zones or 100 units per acre in the 65 ft. zones. That's really dense, with no space between them. The next one is you subsidize it. Seattle spends more than any other city, that's my guess, on subsidizing per capita basis. The theory is that non-profits can do it, but it is important to remember that it costs more for non-profits to build a unit than it does for-profit developers. They spend more per unit, but when they're done with it it presumably gets to be low-income or more affordable. My personal favorite is, since my mother moved into an apartment my mother is a much happier person and is much more with it.

As compared to where did she live before?

Living in her SF house after my dad died. She's got a lot more friends, she does a lot more things, she's in better shape than she was before. So, I like the idea of having more places for elderly places to move in that are interesting, like the one you mentioned, New Holly. Because if they move out of their houses then families can move into those houses. I do not like the notion of subsidizing older, single people to be alone in houses. When I went to the Netherlands about 10 years ago to look at housing and planning and transit, we told them we were subsidizing. That we actually had programs to feed people in their houses, upkeep their houses, and build ramps on their houses. They looked at us like we were completely nuts. That is totally inefficient use of space, why would you do all those things to keep somebody in a huge house all by them self? You've got to be crazy. So, I would see we should err on that side. Deregulation seems to be a theme that we're supposed to adhere to; we're supposed to be bowing down to deregulation. I don't see any nexus between deregulating the zoning code and getting affordable housing. I see more profit for developers, who are already making a ton of money. All this stuff wouldn't be happening if they weren't making a ton of money. They're building all over town and making tons of money. I don't see deregulation as an option. I would say that most of the things I've heard suggest there should be more regulation. There ought to be more open space required, more landscaping. You mentioned that row houses are more dense, but they're not more dense than what we're getting as townhouses today. We're getting at least twice as many townhouses on a lot.

Are you in favor of transferring the open space, which I think is one of the proposals up for consideration now. Instead of creating balconies or terraces that are private open space you transfer it to public open space.

No, whether they use them or not, people rate their balconies as their number one choice to have them immediately accessible to their unit. On Dexter there is a project that setback the building to create a public plaza in front. I think those are also good because they are an amenity to people. And lastly I got to say, public transit is the most important thing to make housing affordable. Because it doesn't lower the housing costs, it probably makes it a little more expensive, but if you don't have to have a car you are way ahead of the game.

I have to agree with that. Welcome to the transit appreciators club. I would like to hear more on that. I would just say, representing QA Hill with the concept of making it difficult to live in your house after you're widowed is inhumane. And for the individual is often the lowest cost housing is the housing you already bought and paid for and you can get some tax breaks on it.

I'm not sure it was the idea to make it hard to live in it.

That's what I heard.

What he was raising is how much we should, by programs, encourage it.

You shouldn't subsidize living inefficiently.

I disagree with that in the case of older Americans. I think it is inhumane.

Well, I want to say thank you for translating everything we said into code language.

One thing that I heard a lot, is the whole idea of setbacks. That height is not a particular problem compared to the setbacks. That came up quite a bit.

I go up to Vancouver about once a year. The last time I went up I got out my tape measure and started measuring. What I found is that in the West End, which is near the park, the streets are very much like Seattle: 25 ft. from curb to curb. And there is a planting strip which is about 9 ft. wide and that's pretty common in Seattle too, 7-9ft. Six foot sidewalk, just like Seattle, which is about a 1ft property line setback and then the front setback is 20ft or more. In Seattle it is as low as 5ft, it can be zero, it can be averaged down to nothing. The side setbacks are 7 ½ ft uniformly for a total of 15ft. In Seattle they're 5, for a total of 10. They're allowing housing to be built on one lot that are less than 10 ft apart, which is actually a fire code violation.

Yes, I don't understand housing – mega houses that only have 5 feet on each side.

My message is that Vancouver has higher buildings, but they have bigger setbacks. When you walk down the street in the West End you have not only planting strip with trees in it, but you have a green strip between you and the building. Your vision is having two rows of trees, you don't really notice what is going on up there.

I think this could apply in everything from SF to high-rise stuff. In downtown, we're talking about high-rises. SF hasn't been talked about too much, but it seems particularly true in MF too and townhouses.

Why don't you make it clear that you require that 25 ft to be green space and not parking.

7. How can we encourage good design?

Can I make a comment about that question? I don't like the question. Meaning what you were saying before, it makes me really concerned. I'm sitting here thinking, "Gee, isn't this great we're coming together." I'm so impressed with how expert everybody in the room is. I'm highly impressed with the knowledge and ongoing interest that I haven't known about. But, I think the City doesn't need to think about encouraging good design, but rather, requiring good design. Economics drive things and the developer, they have to have what they want. And we're handing our city over to them and they're making money hand over fist. But, the City can take the reins. And the City has an obligation to the people, saying not what can we show in some polite requests to the developers about what some of the people might like, but rather to make some demands.

One of the issues with the good design though is there are vastly different views on what good design is.

Well, let me throw in my two bits worth. And this is a specialty of the QA Community Council LU Review Committee is development that flies under the radar. Which is anything less than 6 units. Very often that has very quality architecture and design. It may conform perfectly and require no variances, but often looks cheesy and there's not design review or peer review of any kind. You can't keep up with it, of course. One solution that the group is proposing is that there style book that be available to anyone who wants to do an under 6 unit Master Use Permit.

Would that be required?

It would be required that you see the style book in one form or another, but you can't force them to conform it. It would show a number of acceptable styles. Under your leadership we did an excellent survey of styles in that group of neighborhoods to show what people like there and what would maximize your developer investment. That's sort of a carrot solution, as opposed to stick solution. And DPD could encourage that and our elected officials could encourage the creation of those style books. It is not the most expensive thing in the world to do at all.

I think giving them to apartment buildings/ MF housing that are already built and is ugly it could be suggest on how to fix them up and look nicer.

If they used the style book you could offer them expedited permitting. That's always a good thing, you waste a lot of time trying to fight through ugly designs.

Design review, I helped write the original one and I was on my neighborhood's for 4 years. There are two things that get negotiated a lot: lot coverage and open space. That allows the design review board to actually have power to require better design. It gives them the leverage. It is all about leverage. The Mayor's current proposal for the mixed-use zones eliminates both of those. They're going to allow open space to be interior or someplace else and they're saying they're going to increase lot coverage until it is total. So, if you want good design you have to maintain lot coverage and open space as a negotiable item. Secondly, you should expand design review. It is interesting to me that there's certain places in the city on major arterials, which makes it transit streets, where there's no design review. So, buildings get built with no sense of what it might be like to walk along in front of them. When in fact, tons of people walk there to get to the bus. I think that needs to be expanded. In the small lots there shouldn't be any subdivisions and no variances allowed without design review. If they want to deviate, let them go through the process.

It would be very expensive to administer well.

Another thing that gets negotiated a lot is the materials. Maybe that is something that could be particularly true in Rainier Valley, they see problems with materials there. I did design review for 6 years and I think we allowed one building with dryvit on it. I don't understand why these other boards allow these materials. Because it isn't like we have different rules than anyone else. So, there are things that can be done. Neighborhoods have their own design review guidelines that they can emphasize certain materials.

I certainly agree that eliminating the levers of the design review boards through the NC code changes will have a strong effect on the city. And it will be a negative effect. We've been pretty successful in Magnolia and QA about getting better looks on buildings and sometimes better setbacks on the sides. Because they're always asking for variances. So, if not variances are asked for there's no power and you might as well dissolve those boards and save the money.